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Brazil should facilitate research permits

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Manuscript category: Letter

Title: **Brazil Should Reconsider Biorestrictions**

[Comment: [If you believe that “biorestrictions” is not clear enough, please feel free to choose another title of your preference, e.g. “Brazil Should Facilitate Research Permits”\]](#)

Brazil is home to more species of plants and amphibians than any other country on Earth, and it is among the four top-most species-rich countries for birds, mammals, and reptiles (UNEP-WCMC 2005). Yet, the ratio ~~between-of~~ taxonomists ~~and-to~~ numbers of species is probably the world’s lowest, up to 40 times lower than ~~in that-of~~ the United States-A- (World Taxonomist Database 2009). ~~The message-G~~iven by Brazil’s expanding investments in meat and ethanol production ~~and;~~ industrial development; and climate changes it is therefore clear that; no matter how effective Brazilian researchers are, they will never achieve the Herculean task of completing a taxonomic inventory of the country or be able to study the complex interactions among species before it is too late—~~let alone studying the complex interactions among species.~~

Despite the clear need ~~of-for~~ increased collaboration between Brazilian and foreign researchers, the Brazilian government and its environmental agencies have only partly succeeded in welcoming foreign scientists. Applying for a research permit in Brazil is ~~known to-be~~ particularly problematic. To further assess this problem, we ~~have~~-launched a survey among scientists who have conducted or who have ~~aimed-at~~ sought to ~~conducting~~ scientific research in Brazil (www.systbot.uzh.ch/static/brazil/questionnaire_form). The responses obtained so far (c. 125) describe both positive and negative experiences. Several foreign researchers have experienced an improvement in the permit application process in recent years, but many report that they still require an excessive amount of time and engagement,

especially ~~from with~~ their Brazilian collaborators. There is also a general sentiment that the process of obtaining a collection permit ~~process~~ impedes scientific research far more than it protects the Brazilian biota.

~~Due to the current~~ This situation means, Brazil is essentially “shooting itself in the foot” ~~as because~~ it is constantly losing unique opportunities for badly needed scientific help. ~~In our survey,~~ Several scientists reported giving up their plans for research in Brazil ~~due to because~~ of the prohibitive nature of the permit-application process. To avoid this Brazil could follow the example of Costa Rica and Panama, where permits are required but quickly issued. For these countries, this cooperation has led to increased international collaboration on biodiversity and conservational projects, better knowledge of their fauna and flora, and competence-building among national researchers.

Increasing the accessibility of foreign researchers to biological resources in Brazil involves many social, economic, and political aspects (Vale et al. 2008), several of which ~~are centered~~ on bio-prospecting and “bio-piracy”. It also partly relies on ~~these~~ researchers acting ethically bona fide (~~meaning of acting bona fide is unclear~~) once they obtain research permits. ~~But~~ The scarce resources of this developing country would be better ~~used spent on for~~ protection of fragile ecosystems from illegal exploitation, than ~~on greasing~~ the bureaucratic machinery that burdens serious scientific work with excessive administrative requirements. Regulations need to be simple and transparent so they will not be for research ~~rather than~~ an obstacle to science research. A few steps have been taken in this direction, such as enabling on-line applications for certain types of permits, but much more is needed to truly speed up the process and regain the confidence and interest of the world’s scientific community.

—This is a controversial subject, and we acknowledge that [some people may view this survey as interference by outside parties, despite one of us being a Brazilian citizen. Ne](#)~~the~~ [perception of this survey in Brazil may be different from what we expect \(what do you expect...well received or not?\)](#). Additionally we fear our survey may be viewed through a [north-south prism, despite one of us being a Brazilian citizen. Ne](#)vertheless, we strongly believe that researchers should play a more active role in science-policy discussions. By sharing our experiences and clearly stating our needs from a scientific viewpoint, we can contribute to the on-going discussions on “access and benefit sharing” within the Convention on Biological Diversity (Jinnah & Jungcurt 2009; www.cbd.int/abs).

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Formatiert: Hervorheben

Kommentar [AA1]: The full name of this organization is "Nederlandse Organisatie voor Toegepast Natuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek", but I would recommend to use TNO since the full name is very long and never used in scientific publications; "TNO" is used in all official situations.

Formatiert: Nicht Hervorheben